a universal-signature-object viewer for utilizing the universal signature object.

54.   The method of claim 53 wherein the universal-signature-object viewer for utilizing the universal signature object comprises:

an application launching means for launching the application compatible with the file format of at least one of the versions; and

a viewer means for displaying information concerning the universal signature object.

55.   The method of claim 45 wherein the universal signature object further comprises:

a signing program for modifying the universal signature object to include an additional digital signature.

56.   The method of claim 45 further comprising the step of:

in response to the universal signature object of the digital data existing:

using the signatory's private key to generate a digital signature of signature data, wherein the signature data is a function of the digital data; and

modifying the universal signature object to include an additional digital signature.

57.   The method of claim 56 wherein the signature data is selected from the group comprising:

one of the versions of the digital data;

the universal signature object, prior to inclusion of the digital signature;

a hash of one of the versions of the digital data; and

a hash of the universal signature object, prior to inclusion of the digital signature.

58. The method of claim 57 wherein the universal signature object further comprises:

a timestamp of the digital signature.

59. The method of claim 57 further comprising the steps of:

requesting a tracking number from a transaction server; and

transmitting at least a copy of the digital signature to the transaction server.

60. The method of claim 57 wherein the universal signature object further comprises:

the signatory's public key.

61. A signing program for binding a digital signature to digital data, the signing program comprising:

a key-accessing means for accessing a signatory's private-public key pair;

a key-verification means for authenticating the private-public key pair;

a universal-signature-object generating means for, in response to a universal signature

object of the digital data not existing:

using the signatory's private key to generate a digital signature of signature

data, wherein the signature data is a function of the digital data;

and

generating the universal signature object of the digital data, the universal

signature object comprising:

at least one version of the digital data, wherein each version has a

file format;

the digital signature; and

information concerning an application compatible with the file

format of at least one of the versions.

62.   The signing program of claim 61 wherein the signature data is selected from the group comprising:

one of the versions of the digital data;

the universal signature object, prior to inclusion of the digital signature;

a hash of one of the versions of the digital data; and

a hash of the universal signature object, prior to inclusion of the digital signature.

63.   The signing program of claim 61 wherein the universal signature object further comprises:

a timestamp of the digital signature.

64.   The signing program of claim 61 further comprising:

a transaction tracking means for requesting a tracking number from a transaction server.

65.   The signing program of claim 64 wherein the transaction tracking means transmits the digital signature to the transaction server.

66.   The signing program of claim 61 wherein at least one of the versions of the digital data has a non-native file format.

67.   The signing program of claim 61 wherein the universal signature object further comprises:

the signatory's public key.

68.   The signing program of claim 61 wherein the universal signature object further comprises: